



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

DEC 22 2006

The Honorable James E. Risch
Governor
State of Idaho
State Capital
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Governor Risch:

The Secretary has considered your petition requesting the initiation of a state-specific rulemaking to address the management of inventoried roadless areas, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §553(e) and 7 C.F.R. §1.28. The Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee met with you about this petition on November 29, 2006, here in Washington, D.C. The Committee has reviewed the petition and has provided the Secretary with their advice and recommendations.

Based upon our review of the petition and the report of the Advisory Committee, we have determined that regulatory direction is appropriate in this case and your petition is accepted. Together we should now proceed with the following actions:

- (a) Develop a Federal/State memorandum of understanding (MOU) documenting the State's participation as a cooperating agency in the conduct of the appropriate level of environmental analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and documentation of other mutual agreements concerning other applicable environmental reviews (e.g. Endangered Species Act) or other matters.
- (b) Coordinate the development of the proposed rule with existing land management planning efforts.
- (c) Ensure that the MOU provides for public involvement and active solicitation of the views of interested parties including consultation with Tribal governments, those who use the national forests for recreation or resource production, and those responsible for managing adjacent public and private lands.

By copy of this letter, I am directing the Forest Service to begin the rulemaking process with the State. It is important to recognize that the disposition of this petition is only a starting point. The proposed rule will be subject to notice and comment requirements under Federal law. The Forest Service will have the responsibility to work cooperatively

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to develop a proposal to establish regulatory direction for the management of inventoried roadless areas in the State. We are eager to move forward.

We appreciate your cooperation and your extensive personal efforts to date in assisting the Department, the Forest Service, and the Advisory Committee to understand and continue to refine your proposal. I also want to add my personal appreciation for your interest in the conservation and management of inventoried roadless areas, and look forward to our continued cooperation in this endeavor.

Congratulations,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Rey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Rey" clearly distinguishable.

MARK REY
Under Secretary
Natural Resources and Environment

Enclosure – Roadless Advisory Committee Advice to the Secretary on State petition

cc: Dale N. Bosworth, Chief